



**THIRD ALTERNATIVE REPORT TO THE COMMITTEE ON THE RIGHTS OF THE CHILD ON THE
IMPLEMENTATION OF THE CONVENTION ON THE RIGHTS OF THE CHILD
PERIOD 2008-2014**

DOMINICAN REPUBLIC

CONVENTION ON THE RIGHTS OF THE CHILD

NGO COALITION FOR CHILDHOOD REPORT

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1. INTRODUCTION

1. This Alternative Report of the Dominican Republic to the Committee on the Rights of the Child, which covers the period February 2008-March 2014, was prepared by the NGO “Coalition for Childhood” (www.coalicioninfanciard.org), a network made up of 31 national and international civil society organizations, which develop co-responsibility actions for the respect, protection and fulfilment of children’s and adolescents’ human rights living in the country.¹

2. In 2011, four (4) regional consultations (in the northern, southern, eastern areas of the country, and in Santo Domingo) were conducted for its preparation, and 45 civil society organizations participated in it: Visión Mundial, Niños de las Naciones, Compassion, Asociación Dominicana de Profesores (ADP), Aprendices con Don Bosco, Misión Cristiana, Servicio Social de Iglesias Dominicanas, Sur Joven, Voluntariado Internacional para el Desarrollo (VIS), Centro de Intervenciones Psicoeducativas (CIP), Plan República Dominicana, Organización para el Desarrollo de la Salud (ODESA), FUSAL, Iglesia del Nazareno, Fundación para el Desarrollo y Bienestar de la Mujer y la Niñez (FUNDEBMUNI), Fe y Alegría, Asociación de Personas con Discapacidad Físico-Motora (ASODIFIMO), Comité Gestor de Peñón, Centro de Investigación y Desarrollo Emocional Mercedes Checo (CENIDEMC), Niños con una Esperanza, Muchachos y Muchachas con Don Bosco (MDB), Save the Children, Caminante Proyecto Educativo, Acción Callejera, Asociación de Guías Scout, Casa Abierta, Plan Estratégico de Santiago, Children International, Aldeas Infantiles SOS, MAIS-Ecpat, Fundación Vanessa, Fundación Cuidado Infantil Dominicano, Hogar Crea Menores, Fundelosa, MANIDI, Centro de Formación y Acción Social Agraria (CEFASA), Pastoral Juvenil, Nichibosco, Hogar Escuela Doña Chucha, Quédate con Nosotros, Canillitas con Don Bosco, Instituto Dominicano de Desarrollo Integral (IDDI), Proinfancia, Comisión Nacional de Derechos Humanos, Servicio Jesuita a Refugiados y Migrantes. The issues discussed during these consultations, based on the concerns of the organizations and the Concluding Observations of the Committee on the Rights of the Child of February 2008, were as follows: education, discrimination, participation and citizenship, violence against children, commercial sexual exploitation and children at risk, disability, health, institutions for the protection of children, family environment and alternative care.

3. Similarly, in early March 2014, a meeting with the NGO Coalition for Childhood, facilitated by an external consultant and with financial support from UNICEF, was held in order to analyze the report of the Dominican Government², to make contributions to the Alternative Report of the Coalition and to better understand the dynamics of the cycle of reporting to the Committee on the Rights of the Child and its implications for the Coalition. As a result of the meeting, the issues of greatest concern to be highlighted in this Alternative Report were agreed, according to the “clusters” established in the “Guideline for NGOs” that present reports to the Committee.

¹ The NGO Coalition for Childhood is comprised of the following organizations: Muchachos y Muchachas con Don Bosco (MDB), Acción Callejera, Caminante Proyecto Educativo, Casa Abierta, Children International, Plan República Dominicana, Visión Mundial, Aldeas Infantiles SOS, Save the Children, Organización para el Desarrollo de la Salud (ODESA), Instituto Dominicano de Desarrollo Integral (INDESUI), Niños Limpiabotas La Merced, Profamilia, Hogar Escuela Doña Chucha, Hogar Renacer, Acción Comunitaria por el Progreso (ACOPRO), Aide et Action, Coordinadora de Animación Sociocultural (CASCO), Unión de Juventud Ecuémica Dominicana (UJEDO), Caritas, Aprendices con Don Bosco, Proinfancia, Fundación para el Desarrollo y Bienestar de la Mujer y la Niñez (FUNDEBMUNI), MAIS-Ecpat, Niños del Camino, Pastoral Juvenil, Centro de Investigación para la Acción Femenina (CIPAF), Compassion, Centro de Asesoría e Investigaciones Legales (CEDAIL), Fundación Futuro Posible, Instituto Dominicano de Desarrollo Integral (IDDI).

² III, IV and V of the Dominican Report to the Committee on the Rights of the Child, sent on July 5th, 2011.

4. The issues of greatest concern are: status of ratification of international conventions and the Optional Protocols of the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC); situation of Dominican citizens of Haitian descent and discrimination based on race, color and ethnic origin; juvenile justice; violence against children and adolescents; adolescent pregnancy (and its linkages to health and education); commercial labor and sexual exploitation of children and adolescents; use of problematic substances by children and adolescents; children and adolescents in institutions; right to play and recreation by children and adolescents; birth registration; social participation and the right of children and adolescents to judge; access to and use of Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) by children; human rights and gender education; quality of health services and education aimed at children and adolescents; accountability for compliance with the Convention.

5. It needs to be emphasized that, during the development process of the Alternative Report of the Coalition, several interviews with key actors of civil society were conducted, at the time of making a broad consultation of documents from different sources³ that were produced during the period covered by the report. Similarly, it is necessary to pay special tribute to the “Fuín Fuán” Report on the situation of the children’s and adolescents’ rights in the Dominican Republic, which is complementary to the Alternative Report. The “Fuín Fuán” Report is the result of a process of consultations across the country with 5,372 children and adolescents participating in their own organizations or in activities developed by the member organizations of the Coalition and others, in urban and rural communities, including those that are located on the shared border with Haiti. This report, conducted in 2011 and put into circulation in the country in September 2012, marks a milestone regarding the informed participation of children and adolescents in the reporting process to the Committee on the Rights of the Child. Many of the concerns and recommendations made by the children and the adolescents in the “Fuín Fuán” Report have been taken up and incorporated into the Alternative Report of the Coalition⁴.

6. This Alternative Report consolidates and summarizes all the consultation process. It is a collective effort in order to provide first hand information to the Committee on the Rights of the Child, so as to have a more complete picture of what happens in the Dominican Republic as to the effective implementation of the Convention. In view of the report of the Dominican Government and the process followed for it⁵, the Coalition expects that data, examples and specific recommendations lead to a constructive dialogue with the Dominican Government during Session 68 in January 2015.

7. In conclusion to this introductory part, the Coalition wishes to express its concern about the elapsed time between the delivery of the report by the Government and the session during which it will be known by the Committee. The shared idea is that the report of the Government could become outdated by the time of its presentation and analysis, while changes in national institutions in countries such as the Dominican Republic, with a complex institutional framework and, at the same time, weakness in terms of continuity, linkages and accountability, could not help monitor the implementation of the recommendations made to improve the status of implementation of the Convention in the country.

³ Documents from the following sources were consulted: Dominican Government; United Nations system in the Dominican Republic; civil society; media; as well as the Concluding Observations of the Committee on the Rights of the Child and the draft document of the Working Group Report for the Universal Periodic Review (UPR), February 2014.

⁴ Copies of the “Fuín Fuán” Report are attached to the NGO Coalition for Childhood Alternative Report.

⁵ Although one of the recommendations of the Committee on the Rights of the Child, in February 2008, was the possibility of having the civil society participating in the preparation of the Dominican Report, the Coalition decided and informed CONANI (who led the process of the Report) in due time, in 2011, that it was not going to participate in this process, so as to concentrate its efforts in consultations with the civil society organizations, as well as with children and adolescents.

2. DOMINICAN REPORT ANALYSIS

2.1. COUNTRY CONTEXT

8. Before proceeding to a section-by-section analysis of the report by the Government, the Coalition has considered important to provide a brief overview of the situation in the country at the beginning of 2014. This is due to lack of an overview introduction in the report by the Government.

9. In this regard, we emphasize that the Government chaired by President Danilo Medina has entered its second year in office (2012-2014), which continues to focus on social development and care for the population at greater social vulnerability. The general atmosphere of the country, in social, political and economic terms, tends to stability, with an economy that maintains its annual growth levels between 3.5 and 4%. For this reason, and in view of the development achieved, the Dominican Republic has been classified as a middle income country, even though 41% of the population lives in poverty and unemployment reaches 15% of the economically active population. Despite the social stability, it is important to highlight the situation of violence and insecurity that occurs primarily in poor neighborhoods of the capital and the provinces. One of the main causes of violence comes from drug trafficking.

10. According to DEA reports and data provided by the 2010 World Drug Report, the Dominican Republic is part of the second most significant route of drugs from South America to the United States. It is also an important drugs bridge from South America to European countries. The Dominican Republic is the scenario of 34% of the cocaine seized in the Caribbean region. Children, adolescent and young people are in a high vulnerable situation due to drug trafficking, drug use and the current form of “all-inclusive” tourism⁶.

11. According to the IX National Population and Housing Census conducted in 2010, the Dominican population was 9,445,281 people, of whom 4,739,038 were men and 4,706,243 were women. These data showed an increase of 882,740 people from the previous census in 2002. At the same time, census data reflects that 70% of the Dominican population lives in urban areas.

12. The concentration of populations in cities presents challenges in different orders; on one hand, the pressure and demand for basic services; on the other hand, the difficulties of the concentration of people in confined spaces, causing overcrowding, health problems and coexistence, which regularly trigger in social violence problems. This is combined with the pressure caused by the large amount of people looking for ways to employment in the cities. It is, therefore, no coincidence that many people are involved in the informal labor market (56%), with a precarious labor market unable to absorb the demand for employment in the formal sectors of the economy.

13. As for the population segment under 18 years-old, it reaches 36% of the Dominican population, with a distribution of 1,835,166 people younger than 9 years-old and 1,567,644 aged 10 to 18 years old. One thing to note here is that, according to estimates made by the State, 46% of children under age 9 lives in poverty, which is equivalent to about 844,176 children.

⁶ Please visit: <http://economistadominicano.wordpress.com/2011/06/03/la-economia-dominicana-en-el-marco-del-narcotrafico-internacional/>

2.2. GENERAL IMPLEMENTATION MEASURES OF THE CONVENTION

[Articles 4, 42, 44 (6) of the Convention on the Rights of the Child]

14. The Coalition stands out as one of the important steps taken in strengthening the legal framework of the country, the enactment of a new constitution, effective January 26th, 2010, and it likewise regrets that the Government has not substantially reflected it in its report to the Committee. The new Constitution contains an extensive process of citizen consultation and participation, reflecting important advances in childhood, with the incorporation of the Article 56 in the Constitution: the best interests of the child as a guiding principle of the actions of the State, the family and the society; the role of such actors as duty bearers; as well as declaring as highest national interest the eradication of child labor and all forms of violence against children and adolescents, while encouraging the promotion of active and progressive participation of children and adolescents in various areas and support these latter in their productive transition to adulthood⁷.

15. Similarly, Articles 26 and 74 of the Constitution establish that international conventions ratified by the State have constitutional status and govern domestically once they are officially published⁸. Hence, the importance of the Dominican Government to sign and ratify all pending international agreements. Among these are: the Optional Protocol on the Involvement of Children in Armed Conflict (OPAC), the Optional Protocol establishing a communications procedure with the Committee on the Rights of the Child; the International Convention against Statelessness (signed by the Dominican Republic in 1961); and the International Convention on the Rights of All Migrant Workers and their Family Members.

16. That said, the Coalition is also concerned about that, although the Dominican Government ratified the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on Sale, Child Prostitution and Child Pornography (OPSC), it has not sent the initial report to the Committee on this Protocol yet, having a delay of four years in its preparation⁹. In addition, it is highlighted that what this Optional Protocol establishes and what steps are being taken to ensure its effective implementation have not been disclosed to the public, including children and adolescents.

17. According to the “Fuín Fuán” Report, while 77% of children and adolescents said they had heard of human rights and that 39% said they had heard about them in school, 51% expressed no awareness of the Convention on the Rights of the Child and 53% said the same about the Committee on the Rights of the Child¹⁰. This may be a reflection, therefore, of the extent to which the State is promoting and publicizing the contents of the Convention in the country, not only among the general public, but also among children and adolescents.

18. Regarding the operations of the National Council for Childhood and Adolescence (CONANI), as governing body of policies for children and adolescents, the Coalition is concerned about that, at the time of submitting this Alternative Report, no CONANI’s Board meetings were held for more than a year. This is preoccupying, as the Board, which is “the highest authority of its decisions (CONANI), of intersectoral, pluralistic, deliberative, advisory and supervisory nature, composed of government and

⁷ Constitution of the Dominican Republic, January 26th, 2010.

⁸ Idem.

⁹ The Dominican Government should have sent the OPSC Initial Report in 2009.

¹⁰ “Fuín Fuán” Report, the rights of children in the Dominican Republic: the voices of children and adolescents, published by the NGO Coalition for Childhood in September 2012.

non-governmental institutions”¹¹, remains without knowing important issues such as the 2013 accountability reports and CONANI’s budget for 2014, just to name two examples.

19. In addition to playing a passive role at present, CONANI manifests weaknesses that persist in coordinating the National System of Protection of Children and Adolescents, being an example of this, as reflected in the Report of the State, that no greater efforts have been made to increase the number of municipal CONANI offices nor the creation of Local Boards of Protection and Restoration of Rights, as is laid down in Article 462 of Law 136-03. When preparing the Alternative Report, the Coalition found that only 11 local boards have been formed, based on the international cooperation’s financial and technical support, which represents less than 10% of the 155 municipalities in the country.

20. The Coalition is similarly concerned, based on the analysis of the Report, about the low existing reporting accounts on the implementation of the Convention, including launched programs, the approved budget vs. the accomplished items, and the impact the various policies, plans and programs are having on the lives of children and adolescents. It is noteworthy that the Report focuses on providing information about ongoing processes without providing disaggregated data, at least by age, sex and geographical location, of the results obtained during the reporting period. Likewise, we emphasize that, although the Report shows the efforts made to strengthen the data system on children and adolescents, the information¹² is incomplete and poor in many cases, which differs from the statements previously made in the Report and refers concerns about real advances and transparency and proper management of data.

21. Based on the above, and having reviewed the Committee's Final Observations on the Convention’s general implementation measures, the Coalition makes the following recommendations:

- To encourage the Dominican Government, by all possible means, to ratify pending international conventions and to make its content available, by all possible means, including the media under the Government’s management and supervision. Particularly: the Optional Protocol on the Involvement of Children in Armed Conflict (OPAC), the Optional Protocol establishing the Proceedings of Communications with the Committee on the Rights of the Child; the International Convention against Statelessness; and the International Convention on the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Their Families.
- CONANI to resume its own institutional framework, its governing role and regularizes the National Board and the various technical committees meetings, strengthens its leadership, transparency and accountability to the public, including children and adolescents.
- That a phased establishment plan, under CONANI’s leadership, is set within a period of not more than five years, for all Local Councils for the Protection and Restoration of Rights and CONANI’s Municipal Offices that are pending. This is in agreement with the different local and national actors represented in the National Directorate of CONANI.
- That, under CONANI’s leadership, further efforts are made to consolidate a gender sensitive national data system on children and adolescents that shows real progress and challenges, with

¹¹ Articles 419 and 420 of the Code for the Protection of the Fundamental Rights of Children and Adolescents (Law 136-03).

¹² The Dominican Report to the Committee on the Rights of the Child can be found at:

<http://www.conani.gov.do/conani/pdf/publicaciones/publicaciones/Final%20Informe%20de%20Pais%20para%20Ginebra%20Miercoles%206-7-2011.pdf>

a better decision-making and accountability service, including the upcoming Dominican Reports to the Committee on the Rights of the Child.

2.3. DEFINITION OF CHILD

[Article 1 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child]

22. Law 136-03 describes the definition of child as the adolescence phase, which covers from age 13 until adulthood is reached¹³. That definition remains in the country today and prevail when establishing responsibilities and penalties. However, it should be noted that the age of marriage has not been heightened, despite the Committee's recommendations in its 2008 Final Observations, staying at 15 years-old for girls and 16 years-old for boys, with the written consent of their parents and duly authorized by a judge.

23. It is also a concern to the Coalition that adolescents who become mothers or who have ever been pregnant (22% of adolescents between 15 and 19 years-old)¹⁴, are considered "adults" by the society and State institutions and lose, in practice, the effective protection of the rights recognized in the Child's Rights Convention and in Law 136-03, and with no answers from the Government for support and development.

24. Also troubling is that, with the process of amending Law 136-03, approved in 2013, the preeminence of the bone test upon presentation of the birth certificate was established to determine the age of adolescents who commit crimes. This modification, which will be discussed later in the Alternative Report, is a real regression in terms of achievement shown by the country in the last ten years in terms of childhood and adolescence.

25. To be highlighted, though, as progress on this issue, is that the Dominican Government approved and released in November 2011, the Public Policy Guidelines for Early Childhood and, last year, issued the Presidential Decree 102-13, recognizing in both documents the period ranging between zero and five years-old as a key phase in the children's development, with priority support from the Government. One could asset that more is gained in understanding the importance of investing efforts and resources in this population segment. The same should be happening with regard to adolescents, who require specific attention, guidelines, plans and programs to help them become "active agents of development"¹⁵.

26. Based on the above, and having reviewed the Final Observations of the Committee, the Coalition makes the following recommendations regarding the definition of boy and girl:

- The Dominican Government to take appropriate action to increase to 18 the age at which marriage is allowed.
- The Dominican Government to establish, with the same priority as it has been done for children between zero and five years-old, policies, programs and effective monitoring mechanisms, that help adolescents and make the corresponding transition to adulthood and all their rights guaranteed, as established in Article 56 of the Constitution of the Dominican Republic.

¹³ Principle II, Code for the Protection System and Fundamental Rights of Children and Adolescents (Law 136-03).

¹⁴ ENHOGAR 2009-2010.

¹⁵ Article 56, paragraph 3 of the Constitution of the Dominican Republic, January 26th, 2010.

2.4. GENERAL PRINCIPLES OF THE CONVENTION

[Articles 2, 3, 6, 12 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child]

27. Regarding discrimination practiced against children and adolescents, the report does not reflect the measures taken by Dominican Government to combat it during the period covered by this report. It is important for the Coalition to draw attention on how discrimination against children and young people of Haitian descent has been affecting them. A concrete example of this is found in Circular 7475 of the General Directorate of Migration, released publicly in May 2012. In this circular it is commanded, by administrative channels, to the Ministry of Education not to enroll foreign children in schools without documentation, being the most affected those of Haitian descent. Given the backlash against this measure, Circular 7475 has been suspended, not canceled, which maintains a latent threat, not to mention that the amount of damage caused in children and adolescents, between the time when it was released and the time when it was suspended, remains unknown.

28. Similarly, the results of consultations with children and adolescents, contained within the “Fuín Fuán” Report, show that about 40% of the respondents were victims of some form of discrimination. Children and adolescents not only said that they are discriminated by ethnicity or skin color, but also for living with a disability (e.g. Down syndrome), for being HIV-AIDS patients or because of their social status. It is important to make a special mention about the unequal treatment of girls and adolescents, given that in the country there are cultural and institutional practices that reflect the discrimination faced by girls and adolescents, who remain relegated to the domestic sphere with low chances of enjoying the opportunities that their male counterparts are offered in communities. An example of this is in the dynamics of domestic work and care of younger siblings, but there is no information from the Government about the magnitude of this phenomenon (at least, no official data is available), as well as the use of public, recreational and educational facilities by girls and adolescents in relation to boys and adolescents.

29. As for the best interests of the child, it has already been expressed previously how it was incorporated as a guiding principle in Article 56 of the Constitution of the Dominican Republic¹⁶. However, the Coalition is emphasizing that to date there is not a guidance document for public officials on how to interpret and apply this principle in the decisions making and in the practices that directly affect children and adolescents. While there have been some courses or seminars on the subject, greater efforts from the Government side must be made so that the principle of the child’s interest is understood and consistently applied. Representatives of the National Congress and judiciary representatives and officials must be included in it. A way to advance in this respect could be to organize a broad debate on the subject at all levels and that CONANI publicizes the General Comment N°14 of the Committee on the Rights of the Child on the principle of the best interests of the child. To be noted that, at present, institutional interests and the interpretation by the responsible person govern the actions in most public services (schools, health centers, prosecutors, town halls, etc.), due to lack of clear procedures that ensure the protection of children and adolescents.

30. As for the right of children and adolescents to participate and respect their opinions, it is stressed that, in most cases and because of the NGOs’ and the Coalition itself’s initiative, steps have been taken to expand the areas and consultation efforts for children and adolescents. There are several examples of this: consultations with children and adolescents to publicize the Final Observations of the Committee on the Rights of the Child, in July 2008, where some 3,500 children and adolescents participated and

¹⁶ Article 56, Constitution of the Dominican Republic, January 26th, 2010.

made their own recommendations for the country; national consultation in the summer of 2011, for the preparation of the “Fuín Fuán” Report, which, as already mentioned, involved some 5,372 children and adolescents; consultations with groups and adolescents organizations to prepare the National Route Sheet on the UNVAC Monitoring Study; regional consultations with adolescents and young people for the formulation of the 2030 National Development Strategy, a process that was led by the Ministry of Economy, Planning and Development, with the direct support from UNICEF and member organizations of the Coalition.

31. This said, it should be noted that although the Report mentions the approval, in 2007, of a resolution by the National Directorate of CONANI, to establish the Advisory Councils for Children and Adolescents, these Councils have not been implemented yet, seven years later, nor is there any coordination to make this happen, even if conditions for their effectiveness exist in the country.

32. Based on the above, and having reviewed the Committee's Final Observations on the general principles of the Convention, the Coalition makes the following recommendations:

- The Dominican Government to repeal Circular 7475 of the General Directorate of Migration and that all measures to guarantee children’s and adolescents’ rights are established, regardless of color, ethnicity, social status, gender and any other condition or situation.
- The Dominican Government, under CONANI’s leadership, to make available, by all means at its disposal, General Comment N° 14 of the Committee on the Rights of the Child on the principle of the best interests of the child and create a nationwide debate, which will result in a Guide for public officials, including representatives of the National Congress and the Judiciary, about what the best interests of the child mean and how to interpret them in practice. Greater efforts should be made to ensure that all public services adapt their programs and procedures and create new programs and procedures to ensure the interests of the child in the daily practice.
- CONANI to establish, without delay, the Advisory Councils of Children and Adolescents, by adopting appropriate channels for consultation and accountability on issues affecting them. It is recommended that CONANI leans on the practical experience of the civil society, such as those belonging to the NGO Coalition for Childhood and that a Guideline for the operation of these Councils is established, with the involvement of children and adolescents.

2.5. CIVIL RIGHTS AND FUNDAMENTAL FREEDOMS

[Articles 7, 8, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 39 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child]

33. With regard to birth registration and the right to a name and nationality, the Coalition is concerned about the various measures taken by the Central Electoral Board (*Junta Central Electoral, JCE*), such as Resolution 12-07¹⁷, which still remains in force, and Judgment 168/13 of the Constitutional Court¹⁸, issued in September 2013. Both decisions are dramatically affecting the right of thousands of Dominicans of Haitian descent, including children and adolescents¹⁹. Judgment 168/13 of the

¹⁷ More information about Resolution 12-2007 of the Central Electoral Board (JCE) can be found at: <http://bono.org.do/wp-content/uploads/2011/11/odhh9.pdf>

¹⁸ Judgment 168/13 of the Constitutional Court can be found at: <http://tribunalconstitucional.gob.do/sites/default/files/documentos/Sentencia%20TC%200168-13%20-%20C.pdf>

¹⁹ Some testimonials of those affected by the JCE Resolution 12-2007 can be found at: <http://www.opensocietyfoundations.org/multimedia/we-are-dominicans>

Constitutional Court right of shelter was denied to Juliana Deguis, who, at the time of sentencing was 28 years-old. Juliana was born in the country and has a copy of the documents that support their nationality as a Dominican citizen. Through the right of shelter, she was demanding protection against denial of the delivery of identity documents, administratively suspended by the Central Electoral Board (JCE).

34. The Constitutional Court, in issuing the judgment, not only denied the requested protection to Juliana Deguis, but also ordered the JCE to audit the Civil Registry for the period 1929-2013, to detect all cases of Dominican citizens, children of foreigners, that could have any irregularities in their birth registration and proceed with the cancellation of these documents accordingly. The Constitutional Court, called to ensure the proper interpretation of the Constitution, obviated this and ignored the provisions of the Constitution that states that “Dominicans are those who have the Dominican nationality before the entry into force of this Constitution”²⁰. Juliana's case is emblematic, as neither she nor her four children are recognized in this condition.

35. Figures on the number of people affected by the Constitutional Court vary; however, the Coalition draws attention to what this means in terms of civil rights to thousands of children and adolescents, children of foreigners, mostly Haitians, affected by this judgment, particularly regarding the access to basic services, such as education, health, protection from different ways of violence and social security. It is also necessary to emphasize that CONANI has not publicly expressed any concern, rejection or technical opinion on how the JCE Resolution 12-07 and Judgment 168/13 of the Constitutional Court is affecting children and adolescents living in the Dominican Republic and who were born to Dominican parents of Haitian descent. The Central Government announced the Regularization of Foreigners Plan, which is scheduled to take effect in 2014, and the submission of a Special Naturalization Act for approval by the Congress was announced. The Coalition is concerned that all these announced efforts could lead people, who were formerly recognized as Dominican citizens, to suddenly be stripped of citizenship and to have them initiate a process to “regularize” their status and acquire the nationality again.

36. As for births registration in general, it needs to be noted that, although 98% of all births take place in health centers and that Civil Registration offices were installed in a significant amount of public hospitals, timely births registrations, according to the current legislation²¹, remains a challenge, so that rates of underreporting of children under 5 years-old remain close to 20% and late registration is still a reality, involving associated costs that cannot be covered by families living in poverty. Even when progress in the joint implementation plans between the Central Government (Office of Social Policy, Ministry of Education) and the JCE to close gaps in the late registration of births have been reported and announced, there is no evidence of the real impact of these measures and the amount of documented people vs. the expenses that have been incurred for such purposes. Eighty-four percent of the children and adolescents consulted during the preparation of the “Fuín Fuán” Report said to have a birth certificate (although they were not asked about the evidence of the existence of it), therefore, it could be estimated that 16% of respondents do not have such document.

37. Moreover, regarding the rights of children and adolescents to seek, receive and impart information, the Coalition highlights that the Report makes no mention about this, which is worrying because more and more children and adolescents have access to media and Information and Communications Technologies (ICT) and clear guidance and regulations to protect their identity, image, confidentiality

²⁰ Article 18 (2) of the Constitution of the Dominican Republic, January 26th, 2010.

²¹ Law 659-44 on Civil Status Acts, 1944. While a review for its modification, adaptation and modernization has started in 2006, no amendments have been made at the time of the preparation of this Alternative Report of the Coalition.

and privacy is required. While campaigns for the safe use of Internet have been developed under the leadership of the Dominican Institute of Telecommunications (INDOTEL), joint efforts between this instance of the Central Government, the Ministry of Education, CONANI and others are required to educate families and these children and adolescents in the use of ICT, besides strengthening the monitoring mechanisms and the prosecution of perpetrators of technological crimes that jeopardize the image and identity of children and adolescents.

38. The Coalition wants to call the attention of the Committee on the Rights of the Child on the limited scope of the measures taken by the Dominican Government to protect the identity and privacy of children and adolescents who are victims or witnesses of crimes committed against them. While in the Dominican Status Report, and in many seminars organized in the country, the establishment of the House of Gessel for interviewing children has been discussed, the reality is that their use is limited and that this mechanism does not exist in most regions. The absence of such a mechanism (of which there is no evidence of effectiveness and impact), may increase the risk of psychological harm to children and adolescents called to testify against their abusers or to undergo more than one interview about crimes and aggression they have been victims and witnesses of, so the chances of poly-victimization increases.

39. Based on the above, and having reviewed the Final Observations of the Committee on civil rights and fundamental freedoms enshrined in the Convention, the Coalition makes the following recommendations:

- The Dominican Government to take all necessary measures for the immediate rescission of Resolution 12-07 of the Central Electoral Board (JCE) and that judgment 168/13 of the Constitutional Court and its effects thereof are cancelled.
- The Dominican Government to adopt all necessary measures for the effective protection of Dominican children and adolescents of Haitian descent and of Haitians who are in the country with their families in an irregular situation. The recognition of the rights acquired by those who have been previously recognized as Dominican citizens must be included.
- The Dominican Government to increase efforts to promote birth registration in due time, through campaigns targeting pregnant mothers, training of public health personnel and registry offices located in public hospitals, with the corresponding monitoring and surveillance mechanism. This should be accompanied by the establishment of partnerships with civil society and work in communities and institutions of the Central Government, linked to the implementation of various social programs, with the purpose of making a survey of the situation that lacks of birth registrations, and late registration sessions to be developed to lead to zero, over the next five years, the rates of the existing underreporting birth.
- The Dominican Government to update the information about access and use of ICT by children and adolescents, as well as the measures taken and their impact on the protection of identity, image, confidentiality and privacy of children and adolescents.
- The Dominican Government to adopt, without delay, measures to help protect children and adolescents, victims and witnesses of crimes, including the implementation of the Chambers of Gessel or other effective measures, while reporting on the impact of the same in a timely manner.

2.6. VIOLENCE AGAINST CHILDREN AND ADOLESCENTS

[Articles 19, 39, 37 (a), 28 (2) of the Convention on the Rights of the Child]

40. The information about measures taken to protect children and adolescents from violence is scattered and incomplete in the Dominican Status Report. While the establishment of the Dominican Education System Standards for Coexistence and School Discipline in Public and Private Schools, released in April 2011, is mentioned, there is no information on whether there is any plan to release such standards and socialize them with educational communities involving children, adolescents and their families. It was not possible to verify the progress in the use of these standards and their impact on the improvement of schools' environment and prevention of violence in schools during the elaboration of the Alternative Report of the Coalition. An exception might be the NGO "Dominican Institute for Integral Development", which operates in the underserved neighborhoods of the northern zone of the National District, with an ambulatory program to handle cases of violence against children and adolescents and that relates that, in their collaboration with schools in the educational District 15-02, there is evidence that school psychologists and counselors play an active role in the implementation of the Standards, with positive effects on the reduction of cases of exclusion.

41. Something to note about the issue of violence against children and adolescents is that, since July 2011, important joint efforts to implement the recommendations of the UN Study on Violence Against Children (UNVAC, 2006) have been made. In late 2011, the Sub-Regional Meeting on the UNVAC Study was held in the country, under CONANI's leadership and with the active participation of the Coalition in the meeting's team coordination. The results of this event were: the signature by the Dominican Government of the Declaration of Santo Domingo with a commitment to develop a National Roadmap for the effective implementation of recommendations 1, 2 and 11 of the UNVAC Study; the conformation of a Country Working Group under CONANI's leadership to monitor the topic²²; the development of a consultancy for the establishment of the National Roadmap; and the formation of a network or platform of adolescents linked to the theme. When preparing the Alternative Report of the Coalition, the Country Working Group remains active, as well as the adolescents' platform, while a draft National Roadmap document is under revision and amelioration, to be finally approved by CONANI's National Board and put into circulation in 2014.

42. Regarding the issue of violence against children and adolescents, there are also other challenges in the country. Among them are the absence of specific guidance programs for families to positive parenting, not children abusers, in addition to effective measures and mechanisms that contribute to the care of children and adolescents who are victims or witnesses of violence. Nor is there any gamma of diurnal and residential ambulatory programs for victimized children and adolescents that respond to their needs or those of their families. There is only one type of governmental program for this population, "Hogares de Paso" (Transition Homes), short-term residential programs. The 11 transition homes that are currently operating are overloaded and only able to respond appropriately to a minority of cases.

43. At ambulatory level, psychological services are available in hospitals; however, the personnel does not receive any specific training on the treatment to be given to children and adolescents. These psychological services do not have a multidisciplinary support team or at least social workers to make

²² The Country Working Group is comprised of the NGO Coalition for Childhood, the Interinstitutional Commission Against Sexual Abuse and Exploitation, UNICEF, ILO and CONANI, which coordinates it.

home visits, which means that in most of the aforementioned cases, the family stops attending quickly after a while and continue to abuse their children. Several NGOs organize diurnal and residential ambulatory programs for vulnerable children and adolescents, who generally have well-organized programs. These NGOs receive none or very little financial support from the Government. Significantly, there are no good practices from the Government to measure the process of care, recovery, rehabilitation and restoration of rights of children and adolescents victims of violence. While there is an improvement in the pursuit of the aggressors and the prosecution of cases, the psychosocial, appropriate, of quality and warmth attention, remains a challenge, especially in communities in poverty situation and far from the capital city.

44. In addition to the above it must be said that, currently, there are no Guidelines and Care Protocols for children and adolescents who are victims or witnesses of violence, within any of the various health services, education, NGOs, etc. There remains a weak link for the referral of cases locally and there is a gap between the different institutional statements and practices that take place in the services provided to victims. The Institutional Ethnography on the Institutional Practices System of Children and Adolescents Protection, conducted by UNICEF in accordance with Ryerson University and IDEFA released in March 2011, showed what is expressed above²³. For the 11 municipalities where Local Boards for Protection and Restitution of Rights were created, there is no strengthening plan for the interagency coordination.

45. The Coalition is also concerned about the situation of domestic violence and the high number of feminicides that occur each year in the country, not only regarding what happens to women victims of violence, but also to their children, who become victims themselves, sometimes, or they witness or become orphaned because of the violence, with the consequent impact this has on their lives. As an example, of 190 murders of women reported in 2005, it went to 210 cases in 2010, representing an increase of 10% for this period and the occurrence of a feminicide every 1.5 days in the year. According to estimates made by the General Attorney's Office, every mother leaves between two and three orphan children or adolescents. No significant efforts from the Government are detected to monitor and give comprehensive and appropriate care to children and adolescents whose mothers suffer systematic violence by their partners, including those children and adolescents, witnesses or orphaned because of domestic violence. At the time of the submission of this Alternative Report of the Coalition, 22 feminicide cases²⁴ occurred in 2014 so far were counted.

46. According to the statement made by children and adolescents in the consultations for the preparation of the "Fuín Fuán" Report, a little more than half of them said they feel protected from violence and 40% of respondents claimed to be victim of corporal punishment. In fact, for children and adolescents, the right to protection from violence is one of the most violated rights in the country. In this regard, the Coalition believes it is essential the Government to establish mechanisms and legal provisions²⁵ prohibiting corporal punishment in families and that adequate guidance to families to avoid physical and psychological punishment against children and adolescents is provided to them through schools and other meeting places such as churches and faith-based communities. The Coalition highlights the efforts that began three years ago under the leadership of the Global Network of Religions

²³ The Institutional Ethnography on Institutional Practices in the System Protection of Children and Adolescents can be found at: http://www.unicef.org/republicadominicana/resources_19975.htm

²⁴ Please visit the following link: <http://www.listindiario.com.do/la-republica/2014/3/5/313230/Van-22-feminicidios-en-dos-meses>

²⁵ As expressed in Article 56 of the Constitution of the Dominican Republic, January 26th, 2010.

for Children (GNRC) to involve religious leaders of the various streams and denominations in the country, in the dialogue on the subject and the adoption of specific commitments in this regard.

47. Based on the above, and having reviewed the Final Observations of the Committee, the Coalition makes the following recommendations regarding violence against children and adolescents:

- The Dominican Government to adopt the National Roadmap for the Implementation of Recommendations 1, 2 and 11 of the UNVAC Study as a model of commitment to be implemented and monitored from the Central Government with the active participation of NGOs, children and adolescents.
- The Dominican Government to conduct a nationwide study on the magnitude and extent of violence against children and adolescents, to provide a baseline that allows the development of policies and programs based on the needs.
- The Dominican Government to conduct a national inventory of institutions and organizations providing protective services and psychosocial care and develop performance Standards for different types of programs, while establishing mechanisms for technical and financial support for the various programs and services provided.
- The Dominican Government to strengthen coordination mechanisms between institutions and organizations at municipal, provincial and national levels, in order that children who require it, receive a timely, of quality and warmth response that contributes to the recovery and restoration of their rights.
- The Dominican Government to review the current legal framework regarding the protection of children and adolescents against violence, to update it and prohibit corporal punishment in the families, based on the provisions of Article 56 of the Constitution of the Republic.

2.7. FAMILY ENVIRONMENT AND ALTERNATIVE CARE FOR CHILDREN AND ADOLESCENTS

[Articles 5, 9, 10, 11, 18, 20, 21, 25, 27 (4) of the Convention on the Rights of the Child]

48. Regarding the family environment and the alternative care for children and adolescents, the Coalition recognizes the efforts made by the Central Government in the development of social protection programs for families, such as the governmental program “Progressing with Solidarity”, coordinated and supervised by the Social Policy Cabinet attached to the Vice Presidency. It should be noted that although this program covers a large number of families, there is insufficient information about the impact that the program has had in the last five years, and also that it previously depended on the Office of the First Lady and is now supervised by the Vice Presidency, since the former First Lady is currently the Vice President of the Republic, which could lead to inconsistencies and weaknesses in terms of sustainability of the program, once the current governmental period is completed. The Vice Presidency itself has made a proposal to the Family Code²⁶, which has been given to the President in February 2014, to be submitted for Congress’ approval. The contents of the proposal are not known by the Coalition yet.

²⁶ Please visit: <http://hoy.com.do/crearan-ministerio-de-familia-y-mejoraran-la-vida-de-familias>

49. The Coalition also recognizes that Article 55 of the Constitution of the Republic of January 26th, 2010, establishes the rights of families. In that sense, the article reaffirms the family as “the foundation of society and the basic space for the integral development of the people”. Similarly, it is established that the Dominican Government shall ensure the protection of the family, while doing the same with motherhood “regardless of the social or marital status of women²⁷”. It also states that “all children are equal before the law, have rights and duties and enjoy the same opportunities for social, spiritual and physical development. Any mention of the nature of the affiliation is prohibited in civil records and identity documents²⁸”. This is a step forward in the recognition of rights and the protection of the dignity of children and adolescents, especially when compared to the previous Constitution and the established practices of declaring children as “illegitimate children” with the corresponding negative connotations the term implies.

50. The NGO Coalition for Childhood’s concern about the alternative care is the number of children and adolescents that, according to the Status Report, are living in institutions (3,030 children and adolescents). During the consultation made to organizations in March 2014, they said that many institutions that provide care and custody of children and adolescents have been closed by CONANI because of mismanagement, while recognizing that there are no National Standards or Guidelines Procedures approved by the National Board of CONANI to run these institutions and the provision of their services. While CONANI has a record of the institutions, it is not known under what conditions, based on the current legislation, these are enabled²⁹ and how often and in what way these are monitored and the habilitation register renewed. The Coalition is concerned about the infrastructure conditions of various institutions and how children and adolescents are admitted and remain in these institutions. In some cases, it has been noted that children are admitted irregularly, without a court order or documents supporting their identity.

51. Although the Dominican Government mentions a pilot program of foster families as an alternative care for children and adolescents who require it, which is being implemented in five municipalities with Local Boards for Protection and Restitution of Rights this year, no information on the progress of this program, costs, capacities for the reception, performance standards and other associated items are known when submitting the Alternative Report of the Coalition. Neither is known about the impact the Foster Homes program for battered women and their children³⁰, under management and supervision of the Ministry of Women, has had, nor the number of cases handled and the steps taken in the program for the protection and welfare of children and adolescents whose mothers have been victims of domestic violence. While confidentiality about the location of foster homes is a standard, this does not mean that the Ministry of Women, together with CONANI, should not report on the operation of the program, routinely.

52. Another important item to note is the high number of adolescent mothers in the country, one of the highest adolescent fertility rates in the Latin America region (92 per 1,000). It is not known to date the existence of a plan or program from the Dominican Government to support teenage mothers, including those that allow them to continue their studies, access to decent employment and provide proper care to their children.

²⁷ Article 55 (6) of the Constitution of the Dominican Republic, January 26th, 2010.

²⁸ Idem.

²⁹ Law for the Promotion and Regulation of Non-profit Associations in the Dominican Republic (Law 122-05).

³⁰ It is recommended to visit the following link: <http://elnacional.com.do/casas-de-acogida-2/>

53. On the issue of adoptions, the Coalition recognizes that the creation of a CONANI Adoption Management, responsible for monitoring applications by Dominican and people of other nationalities, is a step forward. However, the Coalition is concerned about the lack of transparency and accountability in the adoption processes and their results. While CONANI's website shows some information on the subject³¹, there is no data on the progress in this field.

54. Also, there is no documented information on the measures taken by the Dominican Government to protect children and adolescents, children of women who have immigrated to other countries for economic reasons, or information about measures ensuring the reunification or return home of Haitian children and adolescent who are deported to their country. In this regard, a recent report by the Directorate General of Immigration outlined in national media states that about 881 children and adolescents were deported to the neighboring country³² (equivalent to 6.2 % of all deportees) in 2013, without clear information on how such deportations were undertaken. At the same time, the Coalition is concerned that, as a result of such deportations of adults to Haiti, children and adolescents remain without proper parental care in the country, increasing the risks of abuse and all forms of violence.

55. Based on the above, and having reviewed the Final Observations of the Committee, the Coalition makes the following recommendations on the issue of family environment and alternative care for children and adolescents:

- The Dominican Government to publicize and submit for extensive discussion the Preliminary Draft of the Family Code, in order that all stakeholders can make their contributions and the views of children and adolescents be heard and taken into account.
- To urge the Dominican Government to adopt, as a matter of urgency, National Standards or Procedural Guidelines for the authorization and functioning of institutions operating under foster care, guardianship and care of children and for the entry, sojourn and departure of children and adolescents of these institutions, particularly children and adolescents with disabilities or immigrants. These National Standards or Procedural Guidelines should be agreed with the member organizations of the Coalition and the institutions providing this type of service, while a Supervisory and Monitoring Committee for its implementation is created.
- The Dominican Government, through the Directorate General of Immigration and in coordination with CONANI, be transparent, improve and disseminate the processes and procedures followed during deportation and transfer of children and adolescents into Haitian territory and the coordination with Haitian protection institutions for such purposes is improved.

2.8. DISABILITY AND BASIC HEALTH SOCIAL SECURITY OF CHILDREN AND ADOLESCENTS

[Articles 6(2), 24, 24(3), 26, 18(3), 27 (1-3), 33 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child]

56. The Coalition recognizes the progress made by the country regarding health in the last five years, including those contained in the Dominican Status Report. However, it is concerned that the maternal and infant mortality remain above the regional average, having at present, 106 maternal deaths per 100,000 live births and 25 deaths of children per 1,000 live births. This is so because, as previously

³¹ Please visit: <http://www.conani.gov.do/conani/post2.php?p=adopciones>

³² Information about this is at: <http://hoy.com.do/direccion-migracion-deporto-14192-haitianos-durante-2013/>

stated in the report, 98% of deliveries take place in health institutions, so that both rates should be lower. According to the latest Dominican Republic Report on Monitoring the Millennium Development Goals, it is not expected that both figures reach the goal set by the country, by 2015³³.

57. As for the issues related to nutrition of children and adolescents, it needs to be emphasized that exclusive breastfeeding during the first six months of life remains a challenge in the country, not exceeding 8% of women who breastfeed their children. Although the Dominican Government makes efforts and campaigns each year in favor of breastfeeding, changes in the number of women and families who have adopted this practice are not displayed. Also, it should be noted the efforts made by the Dominican Government and mentioned in the Status Report, as to the provision of micronutrients to pregnant women and as for the school feeding program. On the latter, it has been recognized that this is one of the measures that contributed to the retention of children and adolescents in schools, while it is to be noticed that greater efforts should be made in schools, involving families and students, to make quality food and manage them following the relevant hygiene standards.

58. As for children and adolescents living with disabilities, the Coalition wants to draw attention to the initiatives that have been implemented by the Dominican Government to ensure inclusion and respect, based on the rights of childhood and adolescence in this situation. One of the current initiatives is the creation of Centers of Care for Children with Disabilities (CAID), which are specialized centers for children between 0 and 10 years-old, under the management and supervision of the Office of the First Lady, with a projection of four referral centers for the country in 2016. The first center has been put into operation in the capital city whilst the Alternative Report of the Coalition is drawn up.

59. However, while it is true that the CAID³⁴ offers a modern structure, it must be said that at the time of the preparation of the Alternative Report of the Coalition, there is no information about the model under which these centers operate and how coordination is made to have children and adolescents benefit from the services offered at these centers. At the same time, to be pointed out the difficulties in their sustainability, since, on the one hand, they are being built with contributions from international cooperation and, on the other hand, they have been placed under the management and supervision of the Office of the First Lady, whose priorities may be changed with the following governance after 2016. It is required that the Dominican Government further reflects its plans and programs to ensure and fulfill the rights of children and adolescents living with disabilities, including the rights to health and education.

60. An important aspect that has been mentioned elsewhere in the Alternative Report of the Coalition has to do with the high percentage of teenagers between 15 and 19 years-old, who are mothers or have ever been pregnant. While the national average is 22%, there are provinces like Azua, where the teenage pregnancy rate is the highest one, reaching 37%. According to a report submitted by the Luis Eduardo Aybar Hospital, located in the capital city, 1,371 deliveries were performed at adolescents between 15 and 19 years-old³⁵ only in this hospital, which is not a mother-child center, in 2013, being an example of the magnitude of the phenomenon and its health implications for both the teenage mothers and their children. Despite the existence of a National Plan for the Prevention of Teenage Pregnancy in force until 2016, and the creation by the President of the Republic of an interagency commission, by Decree 264-13, to monitor the implementation of the plan, the teenage pregnancy figures remain high.

³³ Ministry of Economic Planning and Development (MEPyD) Report on the monitoring of the Millennium Development Goals, 2013: <http://economia.gob.do/mepyd/publicacion/tercer-informe-de-los-objetivos-de-desarrollo-del-milenio-odm/>

³⁴ Please visit: <http://www.primeradama.gob.do/Proyecto-CAID>

³⁵ Please visit: <http://www.listindiario.com.do/la-republica/2014/3/10/313695/Hospital-Luis-Eduardo-Aybar-atendio-a-162493-pacientes>

According to data provided by some representatives of the Congress, nothing has been spent of the 31 million of Dominican pesos allocated for the implementation of the plan³⁶.

61. Similarly, to be mentioned the situation of children and adolescents consumers of problematic substances. While the Dominican Status Report mentions the creation of a Center for Adolescent Substance Consumer Care in the capital city, there was no information on the operation of the center and its impact it on adolescents upon submission of the Alternative Report of the Coalition. It is also worrying that there is not an adequate response from the Dominican Government for the prevention of risk behaviors, or plans to promote healthy lifestyles, which are known to the communities and institutions that work with adolescents. The Coalition is concerned that the emphasis on the subject is placed on the data on adolescents with addictions rather than on the actions that are developed or may be developed together for the prevention and care of the specific needs of adolescents. It is important for the Dominican Government to invest more efforts and resources on adolescents' health and to increase interagency coordination for such purposes.

62. Based on the above, and having reviewed the Final Observations of the Committee, the Coalition makes the following recommendations regarding disability issues, basic health and social security for children and adolescents:

- The Dominican Government is urged to make greater efforts and dedicate the necessary resources to accelerate the reduction of maternal and infant mortality in the country, making sure the centers report and respond appropriately to high-risk pregnancies and pregnant women are monitored from primary care units in communities and NGOs, with emphasis on adolescents, from the early stages of pregnancy, so that births occur without major complications.
- The Dominican Government to make a national inventory and consolidate all existing initiatives for the care of children and adolescents with disabilities, while redoubling efforts for the early detection of disability, through appropriate guidance to health and education personnel and families in communities. These efforts should be under the leadership of a national authority as CONANI or the National Council on Disability (CONADIS).
- The Dominican Government is urged to immediately set a timetable for the implementation of the National Plan of Adolescent Pregnancy and that monitoring mechanisms and accountability accounts on the implementation of the Plan are stated in consensus with all relevant actors, including adolescents. This should occur while health services for adolescents of both sexes are strengthened in communities, not only by improving the quality of care and the treatment that is offered, but also through the orientation and pregnancy prevention campaigns, STIs, and HIV-AIDS.
- The Dominican Government to give transparent information regarding the efforts made on the prevention and care of problematic substance use by children and adolescents, as well as to promote healthy lifestyles among the pediatric population. Experience gained by NGOs such as those members of the Coalition and others with proven expertise in the subject should be taken under consideration.

³⁶ Additional information can be found at: <http://hoy.com.do/ministerio-de-mujer-usa-los-fondos-para-embarazos>

2.9. EDUCATIONAL, RECREATIONAL AND CULTURAL ACTIVITIES

[Articles 28, 29, 30, 31 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child]

63. The Coalition wants to acknowledge the Dominican Government's political will to improve education, shown under the present 2012-2016 government. Within this, it is important to note: the approval and allocation of 4% of GDP for the pre-university education from the year 2013, the implementation of a comprehensive program of construction and improvement of school infrastructure to meet existing classrooms demand, the improvement of student welfare programs, as well as on training and amelioration of teachers' performance.

64. It is important to distinguish the effort that is made by the Central Government to eradicate illiteracy in the country, affecting about 56,000 aged 15 to 24 years-old³⁷, through the "Quisqueya Aprende Contigo" Plan (*Quisqueya learns with you*) in addition to the "Quisqueya Empieza Contigo" Plan (*Quisqueya begins with you*), whose goal is to take care of more than half a million children between 0 and 5 years-old who, through various forms of this plan, in 70 priority areas across the country by 2016. Currently, the document of the National Pact for Education is awaiting its signature, and this is one of the commitments arising from the National Development Strategy to 2030 and it is expected to be the guide to the various efforts in education to be conducted in the country in the coming years.

65. One of the most important efforts to improve the quality of education in the country, which is the biggest challenge today, is the Extended Sessions program. It is expected that children and adolescents should have more hours of effective classes in schools via this program, accompanied by curricular initiatives that serve to increase the learning and life skills, accompanied by appropriate school feeding. That said, when submitting the Alternative Report of the Coalition, some 579 schools have entered this modality and 919 other schools are expected to do so from August 2014³⁸. However, the Coalition is concerned that the program is being implemented, at present, without any orientation guidelines to schools and that children and adolescents are not receiving the benefits of the program as announced, as well as being a burden on teachers, who lack the educational tools and skills to work the expected content.

66. On the issue of recreation and children's and adolescents' right to play, it is worth noting that according to the "Fuín Fuán" Report, this was the right that children and adolescents identified as the least that was fulfilled. In this regard, the Dominican Status Report does not mention the efforts made to secure and satisfy this right. This may be indicative of the low priority given by the governmental institutions and the lack of knowledge about the benefits that play and recreation have on the learning and development of children and adolescents. The Coalition is concerned that there are insufficient programs, opportunities and recreational infrastructure in communities, as well as personnel with appropriate skills for sports, artistic and cultural practice in schools and communities. Likewise, it is of concern to the Coalition that children and adolescents with disabilities have limited access to enjoy sports, recreational and cultural facilities.

67. The practice of expelling pregnant girls from schools, in clear violation of the provisions of Article 48 of Law 136-03, is an element of concern. In some cases, such expulsion is "justified" by the education authorities, as a complaint from the families of other children and adolescents attending schools; in

³⁷ Ministry of Economic Planning and Development (MEPyD) Report on the monitoring of the Millennium Development Goals, 2013

³⁸ Additional information about the Extended Sessions can be found at: <http://hoy.com.do/minerd-tendra-lista-para-agosto-guia-contenido-tanda-extendida>

other cases, the change of the adolescent from morning or afternoon shift to the night shift is disguised as a way to hide the situation and open discrimination and violation of the right to education. It is noteworthy that this happens with adolescents only, whereas no similar actions are taken with teen boys who impregnate, which is indicative of the discrimination and exclusion girls and adolescents are facing.

68. Currently, there is no official record data on the magnitude of the situation and the measures taken to minimize the expulsion of pregnant girls from schools, as well as the actions taken by the Dominican Government to ensure science-based sex education, free of stereotypes and prejudices and from a rights perspective, from the first levels of basic education. In fact, efforts in this regard are limited and the adjustments to the educational curriculum are not being made. There is a need of more interagency coordination and accountability that shows the impact of orientation programs implemented by the Ministry of Education for the education in sexuality for children and adolescents in schools.

69. A final point of concern for the Coalition regarding the right to education has to do with human rights education and gender in the country. As mentioned earlier in the report, only 39% of children and adolescents consulted in the preparation of the “Fuín Fuán” Report said they heard about human rights in school. In that sense, it is necessary that the Dominican Government strengthens its citizen education programs, from the earliest grades of basic education and be accountable for the impact that these programs have. Guidance and sustained work of the Ministry of Education is required, in accordance with CONANI, to work with principals and teachers, in order that they know and master the content linked to education for citizenship, human rights and gender equality. As part of the factors associated with quality of education, the Dominican Government should improve the use of indicators and standards that help transform schools into learning centers open to diversity, where equal treatment and respect for individual opinions are the norm.

70. Based on the above, and having reviewed the Final Observations of the Committee, the Coalition makes the following recommendations regarding the issues of education, recreation and cultural activities for children and adolescents:

- The Dominican Government to develop a guide that provides orientation to the Extended Sessions program and that the impact achieved in the learning of children and adolescents in its permanence in school and promotion to the next level course is made known on an annual basis, at national level and for every school participating in the program. For the successful implementation of the Extended Sessions program, the Ministry of Education should take into account the provisions of the General Comment N° 1 of the Committee on the Rights of the Child on the aims of education.
- The Dominican Government is urged to redouble efforts to eliminate once and for all, the practice of expelling pregnant girls from schools, including the practice of change of schedule or school, while implementing a national education program on science-based sexuality, free of prejudices and stereotypes from the perspective of human rights, from the first grades of basic education in all schools. NGOs should be included to monitor the program and hear the opinion that adolescents might have.
- The Dominican Government to extend existing capabilities and to create new opportunities for the exercise of the rights associated with play and recreation and to involve local governments in this. This should be done while developing a national campaign, involving children and

adolescents, in which they discuss and promote initiatives to ensure and comply with these rights.

- The Ministry of Education to complete the ongoing curriculum review and initiatives and content for education on human rights and gender in schools are incorporated as an important role. The new curriculum to be implemented in schools should be accompanied by mechanisms for monitoring and accountability that reveal the impact of curricular contents in the comprehensive learning of children and adolescents.

2.10. SPECIAL PROTECTION MEASURES FOR CHILDREN AND ADOLESCENTS

[Articles 22, 30, 32, 33, 34, 35, 36, 37(a), 37(b)-(d), 38, 39, 40 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child]

71. The topic about criminal justice of adolescent offenders is the weaker one in the Dominican Status Report. In fact, it is in this area where there has been a serious regression in the country, in terms of respect, protection and fulfillment of human rights. In 2013, the National Congress passed an amendment to the Law 136-03, then promulgated by the Executive, through which penalties for adolescents who commit serious crimes have been increased³⁹. This reform did not take into consideration the extensive discussion and rejection of civil society, children and adolescents and a good part of citizens. In fact, this amendment has passed without any substantial evidence, as well as the cost that depriving adolescents of their liberty⁴⁰ represents to the country, which should be the last measure to take in any case and for the shortest time possible.

72. Along with that, a Draft Anti-Gang Law currently exists in the National Congress, which ignores the fundamental rights and freedoms of adolescents and increases criminalization and control of the same. The Coalition is concerned about the seriousness of this subject and how repression by legislative and practical means has been established as a deterrent measure, while resources for the overall development and social participation of children and adolescents are not being enhanced. Likewise, the Coalition is concerned that CONANI has not made any comments upon the adoption of the reform of the law and maintains an attitude of extreme passivity to deal with this issue, while it has previously assumed a decent defense role by not amending the law.

73. That said, it is important to note that an effective system of educational measures for adolescents who commit crimes has not been implemented in the country yet, so that imprisonment ends up being the first step established by the judges when they deliver judgment. In this regard, it is necessary that coordination between the institutions of the Dominican Government that conform the State Commission for Implementation of the Justice for Children and Adolescents (CEJNNA) is increased, in order to find a solution about it and that alternative measures to imprisonment are implemented. NGOs', children's and adolescents' opinions should be taken into account in this coordination.

74. The time the adolescents spend in prisons is something to consider as a priority during the monitoring of the consequences that the whole process of Law 136-03 reform has brought. During discussions of the legislative reform, it was found that a significant number of adolescents remain detained as "prevented" beyond the time set by the law, which is a flagrant violation of their rights. At

³⁹ The maximum penalty of imprisonment for adolescents between 13 and 15 years old was increased from three to ten years and from five to 15 years for adolescents between 16 and 18 years age.

⁴⁰ Please visit: <http://www.listindiario.com/la-republica/2011/12/14/214592/print>

the same time, adolescents' conditions in the detention centers and social and educational programs that enable them to an appropriate social reintegration, after completion of sentence, need to be increased. The Coalition believes that Governmental institutions should end up the discussions among them on whether the detention centers for adolescents should be or not under the Attorney General's Office's or any other Ministry's management and supervision. Progress must be made on the issue, without further excuses, and human, financial and other resources should be dedicated to the adequate attention of the adolescents deprived of their liberty.

75. Labor and commercial sexual exploitation of children and adolescents is another issue that requires the attention of the Committee. While the Coalition recognizes the information in the Dominican Status Report about the progress made in combating labor exploitation and child labor in the country, it also notices that important topics such as child domestic labor are not being discussed yet, and there is no information about the magnitude of it and its impact on children's and adolescents' lives involved in these activities. Child domestic labor is invisible and considered a necessary practice in many cases, where the contribution made by children and adolescents through this type of activity is seen as an important aid to their own families living in poverty and indigence.

76. The "Fuín Fuán" Report states that 35% of children and adolescents consulted during its preparation said they had to work to be able to eat, which is a sign of the continuing reality of child labor in the country. It should also be noted that, following the earthquake in Haiti in January 2010, the number of children and adolescents brought from the neighboring country through human trafficking networks operating on the island, has increased and they are forced to borrow money at the corners of the main streets and avenues in cities such as Santo Domingo and Santiago. While CONANI announced, on more than one occasion, that measures would have been taken to terminate and pursue this practice, the fact is that it persists and there is no clear and articulated plan not only for the prosecution of crime and human trafficking networks, but neither and primarily for the rescue, care and psychosocial rehabilitation of children and adolescents in their families, whether they are in the Dominican Republic or in Haiti. The Coalition recognizes that, immediately after the earthquake of 2010, the interagency collaboration has increased and a cluster led by CONANI and a protocol of care for children and adolescents victims and orphaned by the earthquake have been created. It is of concern, however, that after a year of its implementation, the protocol did not continue to be used nor were its chances to further develop coordinated special protection measures for this population.

77. The commercial sexual exploitation (CSE) of children and adolescents is a persisting problem. While recognizing, as aforementioned, a progress in the content of the Constitution of the Republic⁴¹, as well as the realization of a Subregional Conference on ESC, organized by UNICEF in 2011, and another international event in 2013, with participation of the UN Special Rapporteur on Sale, Prostitution and Child Pornography, in addition to the signature of the Code of Ethics of the Hotel Industry by hotel companies in the country, it is still true that the phenomenon remains valid and involves networks, operating not only in the tourist resorts and beach areas of the country, but also in rural communities of the country. In fact, there are cases of adolescents who have been brought from the northern zone of

⁴¹ Article 56 of the Constitution of the Dominican Republic, January 26th, 2010. It is declared of "highest national interest the eradication of child labor..." in addition to affirming that "children and adolescents will be protected by the Government against all forms of abandonment, kidnapping, state of vulnerability, abuse or physical, psychological, moral or sexual violence, commercial, labor, economic exploitation and hazardous work."

the country to communities in the Southwest and vice versa, to be exploited in ESC activities by such networks⁴².

78. In a study conducted by the NGO “Caminante Proyecto Educativo” (*Walker Educational Project*)⁴³, with the participation of children and adolescents victims of the ESC and published in 2013, it is highlighted that, in the case of Boca Chica, which is a ESC vulnerable beach area and tourist spot, most of the exploiters are foreigners, with increasing participation of Dominicans and Haitians in the involvement of children and adolescents in the ESC. In addition, according to the study, is very common to barter sex for food or clothing⁴⁴.

79. Although it is collected in this study that most authorities and community leaders recognize the problem, which may be emblematic of the situation in the rest of the country in terms of ESC, it stands out these actors’ tendency to avoid their responsibilities towards the situation, being common they point the responsibility to others, plus there is no clear awareness of the roles and functions to be undertaken by the various actors facing prevention, intervention, exploiters punishment and support to victims⁴⁵. Similarly, the study shows that community members recognize the existence of the problem and their will to report ESC events, however, only 15% of all respondents claimed to have ever made a complaint, which is consistent with other previous studies where it is detected, on one side, the high degree of knowledge and rejection of the practice of commercial sexual exploitation vs the willingness to report complaints and the act of reporting itself.

80. Given the foregoing, the Coalition is concerned that the phenomenon of commercial sexual exploitation remains invisible in the country and receives no systematic monitoring from the Governmental institutions. It is similarly concerned by the fact that children and adolescents victims of ESC do not receive proper monitoring and an effective support program by the Dominican Government to prevent ESC, psychosocial recovery, social reintegration and restitution of their rights, in addition to the low number of solved cases and convictions obtained for the perpetrators of the ESC, as related in the Dominican Status Report. Finally, it is troubling that the existing Interinstitutional Commission Against Sexual Abuse and Exploitation of Children and Adolescents, led by CONANI and the Ministry of Labor, is not very functional and does not take any public position towards the problems or be accountable for the implementation status of the Action Plan for the Eradication of Commercial Sexual Exploitation in Dominican Republic, in force until 2016.

81. Based on the above, and having reviewed the Final Observations of the Committee, the Coalition makes the following recommendations for special protection measures for children and adolescents:

- To urge the Government to immediately take the necessary measures and reverse the changes to Law 136-03 made to, among other things, increase the penalties of imprisonment for adolescents who commit serious crimes, while requesting the Government to rescind any existing measure or draft legislation (like the Anti-Gang Law), whose effects could violate the rights and freedoms of children and adolescents living in the country.

⁴² Additional information can be found at: <http://hoy.com.do/apresan-mujer-trafficaba-ninas-para-prostituiras> and <http://www.elcaribe.com.do/2012/06/26/temen-que-liberten-mujer-proxeneta>

⁴³ Commercial sexual exploitation of children and adolescents in Boca Chica - A look from the key municipality actors’ perspective, Caminante Proyecto Educativo (Walker Education Project), January 2013.

⁴⁴ Idem.

⁴⁵ Ibid.

- That an Oversight National Commission, led by CONANI and the Attorney General’s Office, is created to, together with the CEJNNA, follow-up on the socio-educational and imprisonment implementation measures for adolescents, in order that failures are reported, recommendations to the relevant authorities are made and be accountable to the public, including children and adolescents, on the implementation of the measures.
- The Dominican Government to carry out a national study, with technical and financial support from the international cooperation if necessary, on the magnitude and impact of domestic child labor in the lives of children and adolescents, and that an open dialogue with the participation of those affected be promoted through the publication and dissemination of the study to allow effective action on the issue.
- The Dominican Government to request the Interinstitutional Commission Against Sexual Abuse and Exploitation of Children and Adolescents to prepare a report on the Eradication of Commercial Sexual Exploitation Business implementation plan in the Dominican Republic, in force until 2016, and present it to the country. Based on the results of this report, the Government should take action to combat ESC more effectively.
- CONANI to make greater efforts in the coordination and linkages with the Attorney General's Office and that an action plan for the prosecution of human trafficking of children and adolescents is developed by both institutions. The plan should set out the actions and the resources required for the prevention of human trafficking, victims care until their recovery and reintegration into their families. In this regard, cooperation with Haitian child protection institutions should be increased. The Dominican Government to ensure adequate protection to those human rights defenders engaged in denouncing and combating labor exploitation, trafficking and commercial sexual exploitation of children and adolescents, while increasing actions for the prosecution of these crimes’ perpetrators.

3. COMPLETE LIST OF THE NGO COALITION FOR CHILDHOOD RECOMMENDATIONS FOR CONSIDERATION BY THE COMMITTEE ON THE RIGHTS OF THE CHILD

- 1) To urge the Dominican Government, by all possible means, to ratify outstanding international conventions and their content be available, by all possible measures, including the media under Government’s management and supervision. In particular: the Optional Protocol on the Involvement of Children in Armed Conflict (OPAC), the Optional Protocol establishing the Proceedings of Communications with the Committee on the Rights of the Child; the International Convention Against Statelessness; and the International Convention on the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Their Families.
- 2) CONANI to resume its own institutional framework, its governing role and that the National Board meetings and the various technical committees are regularized, strengthening its leadership, transparency and accountability to the public, including children and adolescents.
- 3) That, under CONANI’s leadership, a plan for the phased establishment of all local Protection and Restitution of Rights Boards and Municipal Offices that are pending is designed within a

period of not more than five years. This is in agreement with the different local and national actors represented in CONANI's National Directorate.

- 4) That further efforts to consolidate national data on children and adolescents, to be gender sensitive and informing about real progress and challenges, while better serving the decision-making and accountability, including the upcoming Dominican Status Reports to the Committee on the Rights of the Child, be made under CONANI's leadership.
- 5) The Dominican Government to take appropriate action to increase to 18 as the attained age at which marriage is allowed.
- 6) The Dominican Government to establish, with the same priority as it has done with children between zero and five years-old, policies, programs and effective monitoring mechanisms that help adolescents to make the appropriate transition to adult life, by ensuring all their rights, as established in Article 56 of the Constitution of the Dominican Republic.
- 7) The Dominican Government to repeal Circular 7475 of the General Directorate of Migration and that all measures to enable children and adolescents see their rights guaranteed are established, regardless of color, ethnicity, social status, gender and any other condition or situation.
- 8) The Dominican Government, under CONANI's leadership, to make available, by all means at its disposal, General Comment N° 14 of the Committee on the Rights of the Child on the principle of the best interests of the child and to create a nationwide debate that will result in an orientation Guideline for public officials, including representatives of the National Congress and the Judiciary, on what the best interests of the child are and how to interpret them in practice. Greater efforts should be made to ensure that all public services adapt their programs and procedures and create new programs and methods to ensure the interests of the child in the daily practice.
- 9) CONANI to establish without delay, the Advisory Councils of Children and Adolescents, through the adoption of appropriate channels for consultation and accountability on issues affecting them. It is recommended that CONANI supports itself on the practical experience of the civil society organizations, such as those belonging to the NGO Coalition for Childhood, and a Guide for the operation of these Councils is established, with the involvement of children and adolescents in its design.
- 10) The Dominican Government to take all necessary measures for the immediate annulment of Resolution 12-07 of the Central Electoral Board (JCE) and Case 168/13 of the Constitutional Court, as well as of their effects.
- 11) The Dominican Government to take necessary measures for the effective protection of Dominicans of Haitian descent and Haitian children and adolescents who are with families in an irregular situation in the country. The recognition of the rights acquired by those whom the Constitution has previously admitted as Dominican citizens must be included.
- 12) The Dominican Government to increase efforts to promote timely birth registration campaigns targeting pregnant mothers, training of public health personnel and of Civil

- Registry offices located in public hospitals, with the corresponding monitoring and surveillance mechanisms. This should be accompanied by the establishment of partnerships with civil society, working in communities and institutions of the Central Government, linked to the implementation of various social programs, with the purpose of making a survey on who lacks the birth registration, and late registration sessions are developed to have the rates of underreporting existing birth lead to zero over the next five years.
- 13) The Dominican Government to update the information about the status of the situation regarding access and use of ICT by children and adolescents, as well as the measures taken and their impact on the protection of identity, image, confidentiality and privacy of children and adolescents.
 - 14) The Dominican Government to adopt, without delay, measures to help protect children and adolescents, victims and witnesses of crimes, including the implementation of the Chambers of Gessel or other effective measures, and that timely statements about the impact of these are made.
 - 15) The Dominican Government to adopt the National Roadmap for the Implementation of Recommendations 1, 2 and 11 of the UNVAC Study commitments as a model to be implemented and monitored from the Central Government with the active participation of NGOs and children and adolescents.
 - 16) The Dominican Government to conduct a nationwide study on the magnitude and extent of the violence against children and adolescents, to provide a baseline that allows developing policies and programs according to the needs.
 - 17) The Dominican Government to undertake a national inventory of institutions and organizations providing protective services and psychosocial care and develop Performance Standards for the different types of programs, while establishing mechanisms for technical and financial support for the various programs and services provided.
 - 18) The Dominican Government to strengthen coordination mechanisms between institutions and organizations at municipal, provincial and national levels, in order that children who require it receive a timely quality and warmth response that contributes to their recovery and restoration of their rights.
 - 19) The Dominican Government to review the current legal framework, in protection of violence against children and adolescents, update it and prohibit corporal punishment in the family, based on the provisions of Article 56 of the Constitution of the Republic.
 - 20) The Dominican Government to submit and make it of public knowledge the Draft Family Code for extensive debate, in order that all social players can make their contributions and the views of children and adolescents be heard and taken into account.
 - 21) To urge the Dominican Government to immediately adopt National Standards or Procedural Guidelines for the authorization and functioning of institutions operating under foster care, guardianship and care of children, as well as for the entry, stay and departure of children and adolescents of these institutions, in particular, children and adolescents with disabilities

or immigrants. These National Standards or Procedural Guidelines should be agreed with the member organizations of the Coalition and the institutions providing this type of service, while a Supervisory and Monitoring Committee for implementation is created.

- 22) The Dominican Government, through the Directorate General of Immigration and in coordination with CONANI, to make it of public knowledge, improve and disseminate the processes and procedures followed during the deportation and transfer of children and adolescents into Haitian territory and that coordination with Haitian protection institutions for such purposes is improved.
- 23) To urge the Dominican Government to make greater efforts and dedicate the necessary resources to accelerate the reduction of maternal and infant mortality in the country, assuring that centers will report and respond appropriately to high risk pregnancies and monitoring is given to pregnant women from primary care units in communities and NGOs, with emphasis on adolescents, from the early stages of pregnancy, so that births occur without major complications.
- 24) The Dominican Government to carry out national inventory and consolidate all existing initiatives for the care of children and adolescents with disabilities, while redoubling efforts for early detection of disability, through appropriate guidance to health and education personnel, and to families in communities as well. These efforts should be under the leadership of a national authority such as CONANI or the National Council on Disability (CONADIS).
- 25) To urge the Dominican Government to immediately set a timetable for the implementation of the National Plan of Adolescent Pregnancy and that its monitoring mechanisms and accountability are stated in consensus with all relevant actors, including adolescents. This should occur while health services for adolescents of both sexes are strengthened in communities, by improving not only the quality of care and treatment that is offered, but also the pregnancy, STIs and HIV-AIDS orientation and prevention campaigns.
- 26) The Dominican Government to make of public knowledge the information on efforts made for the prevention and care of problematic substance use by children and adolescents, as well as to promote healthy lifestyles among the pediatric population. The experience gained by NGOs such as those members of the Coalition and others with proven expertise in the subject should be taken into consideration.
- 27) The Dominican Government to develop an orientation Guide for the Extended Sessions program and that, each year, the impact achieved in the learning of children and adolescents, as staying in school and in the promotion to the next level or course, becomes known at national level and for every school participating in the program. The Ministry of Education should take into account the provisions of the General Comment N° 1 of the Committee on the Rights of the Child on the purpose of education, for the successful implementation of this program.
- 28) To urge the Dominican Government to redouble efforts to eliminate, once and for all, the practice of expelling pregnant girls from schools including the practice of change of schedule or school, while implementing a national program of science-based education in sexuality,

- free of prejudices and stereotypes from the human rights perspectives, from the first grades of basic education in all schools. NGOs should be included to monitor the program and the adolescents' opinions in this regard should be heard.
- 29) The Dominican Government to extend existing capacities and create new opportunities for the exercise of the rights associated with play and recreation and that local governments are involved for this purpose. This should be done while a national campaign is developed, involving children and adolescents, in which initiatives to ensure and comply with these rights are discussed and promoted.
 - 30) The Ministry of Education to finalize the ongoing curriculum review and that the initiatives and content for the education on human rights and gender in schools are incorporated in an important way. The new curriculum to be implemented in schools should be accompanied by mechanisms for monitoring and accountability that reveal the impact of the curriculum in the integral children and adolescents apprenticeship.
 - 31) To urge the Government to take urgent available measures and reverse the changes made to Law 136-03 to, among other things, increase the penalties of imprisonment for adolescents who commit serious crimes; while requesting the Government to rescind any measure or draft law in the present (like the Anti-Gang Law), whose effects could violate the rights and freedoms of children and adolescents living in the country.
 - 32) That an Oversight National Commission, led by CONANI and the Attorney General's Office, is created to, together with the CEJNNA, follow-up on the socio-educational and imprisonment implementation measures for adolescents, in order that failures are reported, recommendations to the relevant authorities are made and be accountable to the public, including children and adolescents, on the implementation of the measures.
 - 33) The Dominican Government to carry out a national study, with technical and financial support from the international cooperation, if necessary, on the magnitude and impact of domestic child labor in the lives of children and adolescents, and that an open dialogue with the participation of those affected be promoted through the publication and dissemination of the study to allow effective action on the issue.
 - 34) The Dominican Government to request the Interinstitutional Commission Against Sexual Abuse and Exploitation of Children and Adolescents to prepare a report on the Eradication of Commercial Sexual Exploitation Business implementation plan in the Dominican Republic, in force until 2016, and present it to the country. Based on the results of this report, the Government should take action to combat ESC more effectively.
 - 35) CONANI to make greater efforts in the coordination and linkages with the Attorney General's Office and that an action plan for the prosecution of human trafficking of children and adolescents is developed by both institutions. The plan should set out the actions and the resources required for the prevention of human trafficking, victims care until their recovery and reintegration into their families. In this regard, cooperation with Haitian child protection institutions should be increased. The Dominican Government to ensure adequate protection to those human rights defenders engaged in denouncing and combating labor

exploitation, trafficking and commercial sexual exploitation of children and adolescents, while increasing actions for the prosecution of these crimes' perpetrators.